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CORRECTION OFFICER STAFFING

The objective of this study, begun in June 2003, was to determine if the current Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC) custodial staffing levels are sufficient for the safe and efficient management of the state's prison population. During the study, the following conclusions were reached.

- The Department of Correction is about 700 correction officers short of the number needed to fully staff the department's custody staffing plan. The shortage is covered almost exclusively by the use of overtime.
- There is no objective method for setting an overall custody staff level or inmate to custody staff ratio due to facility variation, making doing it by statute inadvisable.
- There is significant variation among the Department of Correction's facilities in terms of the number of inmates per custody officer and measures of safety.
- The Department of Correction's procedures for determining staffing needs are consistent with nationally recognized standards.
- Correction officers are generally distrustful of the Department of Correction's incident data and the ability of the department to determine the number of custody staff needed to assure safety.
- Correction officers generally hold the belief prison safety is better now than in the mid-90s, but not safe enough.
- There is no objective method for establishing an acceptable level of safety for either the entire department or individual facilities.
- There is inadequate data on the relationship between staff injuries as measured by workers' compensation claims and overtime.

Recommendations

1. An overall custody staff level or inmate to custody staff ratio should not be set in statute.
2. Changes in the number of custody staff at the Department of Correction should be based on changes in objective measures of prison safety including but not limited to disciplinary reports, inmate on staff assaults, inmate on inmate assaults, and the security risk level of the inmate population being supervised.
3. Beginning no later than one month after the close of the first quarter of the 2005 state fiscal year and continuing one month after the close of every quarter thereafter, the Department of

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Correction shall submit to the governor and the General Assembly's committees of cognizance quarterly reports on the number of: disciplinary reports; inmate on staff assaults; inmate on inmate assaults; and workers' compensation claims by custody staff.

4. If the number of disciplinary reports, inmate on staff assaults, inmate on inmate assaults, or workers' compensation claims by custody staff increase by more than 5 percent over the previous quarter or 5 percent over the same quarter of the previous year, the Department of Correction shall provide a written explanation for the increase and a general outline of the measures the department will undertake to deal with the increase.
5. The Department of Correction should establish a system for handling disciplinary reports similar to the systems used by law enforcement agencies. The system should include pre-numbered blank disciplinary forms or some other means of assuring all reports can be audited and missing report forms can be tracked to a specific facility and location within the facility.
6. Committees of the General Assembly receiving the Department of Correction quarterly safety status report may hold a hearing on the report.
7. The Department of Correction should do a cost benefit analysis on its use of overtime to meet staff shortages. The study should consider as a cost the emotional and physical impact of overtime on staff.
8. The Department of Correction should undertake a study of the relationship between workers' compensation claims and the use of overtime. At a minimum, the study should determine if the incident generating the claim originated while the claimant was working overtime or had worked overtime within 72 hours immediately preceding the incident responsible for the claim. The results of the study should be reported to the governor and the General Assembly no later than January 1, 2005.